



**Department of Education
Charter School Accountability Meeting Minutes**

**October 7, 2013
Renewal Application Process
Initial Meeting - Minutes**

Reach Academy Charter School

Mr. Blowman called the meeting to order. For the purpose of the record, introductions were made:

Voting Committee Members

- Mary Kate McLaughlin, Chief of Staff, Delaware Department of Education (DDOE), Chair of the Committee
- Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary, Financial Reform & Resource Management, DDOE
- Rich Heffron, Senior Vice President Government Affairs, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce
- Paul Harrell, Director, Public & Private Partnerships. DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM. DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources. DDOE
- Tasha Cannon, Deputy Officer Talent Recruitment, Selection and Strategy, Teacher & Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU), DDOE

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Chantel Janiszewski, Education Associate, Charter School Office
- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee

Ex-officio Members (Non-voting)

- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network
- Donna Johnson, Executive Director, Delaware State Board of Education

Representatives of Reach Academy for Girls Charter School

- Lloyd Casson, Board President
- Duane Werb, Attorney
- Maureen Thomas, Business Manager
- Tara Allen, School Leader
- Trisha Neely, Consultant
- Dorcell Spence, Consultant
- Maria Banks, Curriculum Coach

Other

- Dawn Downes, Director of Teaching and Learning, Innovative Schools
- Amber Cooper, Office of Management and Budget
- Alison May, Public Information Officer, DDOE
- Michelle Whalen, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE

Meeting purpose: To review and discuss Reach Academy Charter School's renewal application, to take such further action thereon as the Charter School Accountability Committee deems appropriate including, without limitation, the drafting of a report on the application, and to give the applicant the opportunity to: present additional evidence beyond the data contained in the renewal application, supporting its case for charter renewal, describe improvements undertaken or planned for the school, and detail the school's plans for the next charter term.

Renewal Application Process Timeline: Ms. McLaughlin discussed the renewal application process timeline, identifying October 15, 2013 as the release date of the Charter School Accountability Committee's (CSAC) Initial Report, October 23, 2013 as the date of the Public Hearing, October 30, 2013 as the deadline for the applicant's response to the Initial Report, November 4, 2013 as the final meeting of the CSAC and November 12, 2013 as the Delaware State Board of Education meeting at which the Department's decision on the application will be announced by the Secretary of Education.

Renewal Process: Ms. McLaughlin discussed the changes to the charter school renewal process as a result of changes to legislation, primarily HB 165, and the role of the Performance Framework in making high-stakes decisions around renewals.

Meeting between the CSAC and Reach Academy for Girls Charter School: Ms. McLaughlin invited Ms. Tara Allen, School Leader, to summarize for the CSAC each section of the application, highlighting key points. CSAC voting members asked clarifying questions directly of the applicant after each section was summarized. The sections of the application, identified below, were discussed. Various issues were explored, including those listed under applicable section headings.

1. Overview of the school

Ms. Johnson stated that the percentage of Students with Disabilities enrolled at Reach Academy for Girls does not mirror the demographics of the district in which the school resides, or used to reside. She asked what the school's plans are for increasing the number of students with disabilities including any plans for outreach programs. Ms. Allen stated that they do not have a specific outreach program at this time, and they have not focused solely on increasing those numbers as they embrace everyone that applies.

2. Academic Framework

Ms. Mazza asked if the enrichment program at Reach Academy for Girls was part of their RtI program or an addition to RtI. Ms. Allen stated that the enrichment program was offered in addition to their RtI program. Mr. Harrell noted that as reported in the renewal application, there is a very small waiting list for Reach Academy. In addition, he stated that Reach Academy has a horrendous academic record and this seems to be a hard sell. Ms. Allen replied that after the mishaps of their first year, it was a little bit of a struggle to bring students in. She added that their class sizes are no larger than 25 and that each year enrollment is steady.

3. Organizational Framework

Mr. Harrell asked how many teachers are in the school and how many of them are new. Ms. Allen stated that there are 32 total teachers and of those, 10 are new this year. Ms. Mazza asked Ms. Allen to describe how Reach Academy approaches the IEP process and what is the school doing instructionally for students with disabilities. Ms. Allen stated that students' accommodations are sent to the teacher to ensure that students receive their accommodations. In addition, there are Reading Specialists and Math Specialists that "push in" to the classrooms.

4. Financial Framework

Ms. Field-Rogers asked for clarification of “Other funds” in the budget, specifically what assumptions are made about sources of fundraising. Ms. Thomas stated that funds are collected through cookie dough sales and are mostly comprised of student-driven donations and solicitation of funds by the Board.

5. Five-Year Planning

Ms. McLaughlin clarified that Reach Academy may submit a formal request for increased enrollment regardless of whether they change their education program to Expeditionary Learning.

Conclusion of the meeting: Ms. McLaughlin asked the voting members of the CSAC if there was any additional information they required in order to inform their decision-making. The result was as follows:

Rich Heffron: No

Paul Harrell: No

Karen Field-Rogers: No

Tasha Cannon: No

Barbara Mazza: No

April McCrae: Requested that Reach Academy clarify the data presented in Section 2.3 of the renewal application.

Ms. McLaughlin then asked the voting members of the CSAC if there were any sections of the application that they felt warranted a “Does Not Meet Standard” rating at this time based on their review of the application and the discussions at the meeting. The result was as follows:

Rich Heffron: No

Paul Harrell: Section 2 Academic Framework does not meet standard

Karen Field-Rogers: Section 2 Academic Framework does not meet standard

Tasha Cannon: Section 2 Academic Framework does not meet standard

Barbara Mazza: Section 2 Academic Framework does not meet standard

April McCrae: Section 2 Academic Framework does not meet standard

The meeting concluded at 4:25 p.m.